

Plant pathologist Dennis Gonsalves and his research team to receive the prestigious 2002 von Humboldt Award for Agriculture

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GENEVA, N.Y. -- For developing the ringspot virus-resistant papaya that saved the Hawaiian papaya industry, Dennis Gonsalves, the former Cornell University Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of plant pathology, and his research team will receive the prestigious 2002 Alexander von Humboldt Award for Agriculture.

The research team includes Richard Manshardt of the University of Hawaii, Maureen Fitch of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Jerry Slightom of Pharmacia-Upjohn Co.

Representatives of the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation will present the award during a ceremony to be held Nov. 4 at Cornell's New York State Agricultural Experiment Station in Geneva, N.Y.

"It is somewhat unique that a group of scientists from different institutions and different expertise worked together early on to use a very new technology to develop and implement a timely solution for a severe agricultural problem in Hawaii," said Gonsalves.

After 25 years with the experiment station, Gonsalves recently left Cornell to become the director of the USDA's Pacific Basin Agricultural Research Center in Hilo, Hawaii. The papaya project was the culmination of more than two decades of research. It resulted in two disease-resistant varieties, Rainbow and SunUp, that



Suggestion caption: Plant pathologist Dennis Gonsalves and a research team of cooperators from the University of Hawaii, the USDA, and Pharmacia-Upjohn Co., engineered the first virus-resistant perennial fruit crop to be released to growers. For their work with biotechnology-derived papaya, they will receive the 2002 von Humboldt Award for Agriculture in November.

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were subsequently released to growers in 1998. This gave the \$45 million Hawaiian papaya industry a second chance.

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"The efforts of the team clearly portray the potential benefits of biotechnology in agriculture and have led to further scientific discoveries that will impact the development of disease resistance in other valuable crops throughout the world," said Susan A. Henry, the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of Cornell's College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. "The course they followed through the development, testing and commercialization processes has received national and international recognition. Their work certainly represents one of the great success stories in American agriculture."

Named in honor of Alexander von Humboldt, the 19th-century German naturalist and geographer, the award is presented annually to the person or team judged to have made the most significant contribution to American agriculture during the previous five years. The team will receive a \$15,000 award, a medallion and certificate. In addition the foundation has awarded Cornell a \$5,000 Alfred Toepfer scholarship, which will be given to a Cornell student for agricultural studies in Germany.

Previous Cornell recipients of the award include Steven D. Tanksley, Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of plant breeding, and Wendell Roelofs, Liberty Hyde Bailey Professor of insect biochemistry and chair of the entomology department at the Geneva experiment station.

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